



U.S. Embassy Astana

Central Asia Regional Environmental Hub Newsletter

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I. Hub Highlights

Carnegie Institute's Solar-Paneled Village School Project in Tajikistan Celebrated Its Opening

Renowned Central Asian scholar Dr. Martha Olcott, Senior Associate with the Russian and Eurasian Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan led the way on a fine Thursday morning, May 22, in the opening ceremony for the long-planned and finally completed "School-in-a-Box" project, with lights and computers powered by solar panels. The school of 350 students is largely for orphans (50 students) and for those children whose parents cannot afford to send their children to other schools, and they were extremely proud to be the first village school in Tajikistan to have such a capability. They all wore their school uniforms as they lined the service road entrance to welcome the guests. Several very young students in traditional dress also greeted the guests, each reciting something special in Tajik. Local and national level government officials also came to demonstrate support for this project, and you could see the enthusiasm radiating from their faces as they visited the computer lab and listened to the various uses for this project. The completion of the "School-in-a-Box" is a real tribute to Dr. Olcott's persistence in the face of extremely

difficult bureaucratic and logistical obstacles. Many thanks to the Ambassador for actively supporting this project and taking time out of her busy schedule to come to this village school and participate in the opening ceremony. Her presence clearly demonstrated high level US support for this, and similar projects.





Here is the actual set up: the solar panels in the schoolyard, the storage batteries inside the classroom, and the laptop computers with broadband internet connection.



US Ambassador to Kazakhstan Delivers Speech At Event Commemorating the Cessation of Nuclear Testing at Semipalatinsk

June 18. The US Ambassador to Kazakhstan participated in a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the cessation of Soviet nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk test site (officially closed on August 29, 1991). President Nazarbayev's speech at the event received heavy media coverage. He highlighted Kazakhstan's decision soon after independence to give up the nuclear arsenal it had inherited from the USSR, urged strengthening of the global non-proliferation regime. Nazarbayev called on the United Nations to declare August 29 as the "international day of nuclear weapons abandonment." He also said that the world community should create a new universal treaty on "horizontal and vertical non-proliferation of nuclear weapons." Nazarbayev proposed prohibiting the improvement of existing nuclear arsenals in any form, in order to avoid a new nuclear arms race. In his own remarks, which drew favorable coverage in the local and Russian media, the U.S. Ambassador recognized Kazakhstan's leadership on non-proliferation and drew on President Obama's Prague speech outlining U.S. policy to reduce the threat from nuclear weapons and materials. More than 10,000 were in attendance at the ceremony.

CDC Pilot Project on Flu Prevention in Kazakhstan

May 28. ZAkOn.kz. The Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with the support of the U.S. Central Asian Regional Office of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC-CAR), has developed a draft of the national plan to address an influenza pandemic in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Several ministries contributed to this plan, including the ministries of public health, agriculture, extraordinary situations, defense, education and science, transport and communications, justice, culture and information, industry and trade, finances, the economy and budgetary planning, foreign affairs, and border and customs services. In addition, the World Health Organization and World Bank also took part. The Ministry of Public Health has been tracking the propagation of H1N1 in the world. To date, there has been no registered cases of H1N1 in Kazakhstan. However, there is the possibility of a second outbreak of H1N1 during the autumn-winter period of 2009.

Central Asia Appeals For Help With Toxic Cleanup

June 30. UN Wire/Associated Press. Central Asian governments have launched an appeal, backed by the United Nations Development Programme, to governments and businesses around the world to help clear toxic nuclear waste left over from the Cold War. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan house uranium tailings and other toxic waste that threaten local populations' health and contaminate ground water. Officials from these countries have agreed to work together in cleaning up millions of tons of radioactive waste left over from uranium mining during the Cold War. Igor Chudinov, prime minister of the Kyrgyzstan, says the four countries signed a declaration to set up common programs to deal with the problem of radioactive and toxic waste in the region. The U.N. says Central Asia, which was the biggest supplier of uranium to the former Soviet Union, still holds more than 800 million tons of radioactive and toxic waste. It says the waste is a threat to the environment and damages people's health.

Forensic Labs Receive Scientific Equipment



June 26. US Embassy Tashkent. The U.S. Embassy provided nearly \$400,000 worth of sophisticated scientific equipment and computer systems to forensic science laboratories that provide hard evidence in cases in Uzbekistan's justice system. The equipment is able to detect toxic substances in bodily fluids and tissues, help investigators identify evidence from crime scenes and build an electronic system to ensure that evidence is properly handled and evaluated. The equipment also will be used by medical doctors, particularly in cases where they need to identify toxic substances in a body. The supplies come through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The scientific equipment will be used in forensics laboratories in Urgench and Ferghana. The laboratory in Tashkent has already received similar equipment from the United States. Dr. Zaynitdin Giyazov, Chief of the Main Forensic Bureau of the Ministry of Health, said, "Since we received this equipment, the way we worked in this lab has changed dramatically. We

are doing work now that we would not have dreamed about.” The INL Bureau and U.S. Justice Department have been working with the forensics laboratories as they strive for accreditation under the International Organization for Standardization. Workers have participated in several programs in the U.S. and in Uzbekistan, and Dr. Ashraf Mozayani, the Crime Laboratory Director of the Harris County (Texas) Medical Examiner’s Office, has visited the labs several times to consult on best practices. Mozayani noted that the evidence analyzed in the forensics laboratories can be used in a wide range of criminal cases, including cases involving deaths and serious injuries, sexual assaults, and cases involving toxic substances such as narcotics. The goal of the lab upgrades and training is to enhance forensic scientists’ ability to provide the hard evidence that is at the heart of many criminal investigations.

II. Other News

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan Plans To Launch Kazsat-2

July 2. Kazakhstan Today. Despite the problems with its Kazsat-1 satellite, First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Umirzak Shukeev, at the international conference 'Kazakhstan-Space' devoted to the 15th anniversary of the first flight to the outer space of Kazakhstan's cosmonaut, announce that Kazakhstan plans to launch Kazsat-2. He said Kazakhstan would also design and launch remote-sensing and telecommunications satellites. Kazakhstan also plans to participate in a number of projects with Russia in the field of telecommunications.

USAID: Social Support To Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis Patients In Kazakhstan

USAID's project aims to improve patients’ adherence to treatment of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB), help to ensure positive treatment outcomes, and reduce the creation of further drug resistance of TB. it also enables the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the Kazakh Red Crescent Society to provide social support and directly-observed treatment services to 80 patients diagnosed with multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) in the cities of Almaty and Kyzylorda in Kazakhstan. Provision of these services helps to ensure that MDR TB patients adhere to and complete their treatment, which normally lasts at least 18 months. Strict adherence to treatment helps to slow the mutation of TB; those who default from treatment are at risk of creating and suffering from extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR TB), which is far more difficult to treat. Of the 80 who are served by the project, Kazakh Red Crescent Society nurses make daily visits to the homes of 34 MDR TB patients to directly observe treatment, and to help limit side effects caused by MDR TB treatment regimens. The other 46 patients visit TB dispensaries in both cities, where TB dispensary staff observe patients’ treatment on a daily basis. The project also provides all 80 patients with monthly food packages (rice, buckwheat, oil, pasta, sugar and tea), hygiene packets (soap, shampoo, towel, and a toothbrush), and psychological support. The pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly has also supported the IFRC to implement this activity since 2004, serving other areas of Kazakhstan.

Promoting Progress In Family Medicine Education

June 15. USAID. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its project “ZdravPlus,” in collaboration with the Almaty Post-Graduate Institute for Physicians (PGI) and the Kazakhstan Association of Family Physicians (KAFFP), conducted a training session on June 15 in Almaty to train doctors on the new Computer Based Distance Education (CBDE) program that will help them improve treatment for arterial hypertension. A priority in Kazakhstan is to train doctors in the new standards set forth in the Arterial Hypertension Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG). Twenty-five to thirty percent of adults worldwide are estimated to be affected by hypertension, a “silent killer” that is frequently asymptomatic until a heart attack or stroke occurs. In Kazakhstan, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in adults. Family medicine trainers are working to reverse this alarming trend by facilitating a hypertension integrated improvement program that pools the capacities and expertise of a wide range of stakeholders who are committed to strengthening the ability of family medicine doctors to improve the diagnosis and treatment of this important disease. A new Computer-Based Distance Education course for Arterial Hypertension is part of this approach. The course provides comprehensive, evidence-based guidance on how to diagnose and treat hypertension.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan Opens Aids Center

June 27. RFE/RL. The director of a leading Kyrgyz NGO working to prevent the spread of AIDS has announced the opening of a new HIV-AIDS diagnostic center in the southern city of Osh. Anti-AIDS Union Director Elmira Narmatova said the center is equipped with modern technology and staffed with experienced professionals. She said there are nearly 1,000 people in Kyrgyzstan who are officially registered as HIV-positive, but the real number of infections is much higher. The majority of Kyrgyz HIV patients are intravenous drug users.

Kyrgyzstan Agrees To Provide Kazakhstan With Electricity

July 7. 24.kg. Beginning July 2, Kyrgyzstan has resumed exporting electricity to Kazakhstan, according to Ilias Davydov, Kyrgyz Industry, Energy and Fuel Resources Minister. Export is implemented in amounts of 8 million kilowatt-hours per day. In all, Kyrgyzstan will provide Kazakhstan with 543 million kilowatt at the price of 4.6 cent per kilowatt,” Davydov said. Kazakhstan already made an advance payment in 2008.

Radiation Protection And Nuclear Safety Agency To Be Created In Kyrgyzstan

June 30. Kazakhstan Today. According to Kyrgyz Prime Minister Igor Chudinov, Kyrgyzstan intends to set up a Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency. He said Kyrgyzstan annually allocates resources for preventive measures; however, these resources are not enough to solve the problem because of the current global financial and economic crisis, so it seeks the support of the international community. The new agency will be able to coordinate this work at the national level more effectively and enable better communication with neighbouring countries and the international community.

Tajikistan

USAID Helps Tajik Township Install Potable Water System

Over 3,000 residents in the township of Somoniyon, Rudaki District are enjoying clean potable water again, thanks to USAID support. With the complete breakdown of the Soviet-era water supply system over six years ago, these villagers were forced to use water from open irrigation canals for drinking, food preparation, and all other domestic needs. Despite all attempts to clean the water, rates of gastro-enteritic diseases have sky-rocketed. Last year, USAID's Local Governance and Citizen Participation project provided a \$9,500 grant to the township for the renovation of the water system. The project also trained municipal personnel to maintain the water system and helped educate residents on water conservation, health, and hygiene. The new system provides better access to clean, safe drinking water and has significantly improved sanitation and health.

UNICEF Brings Safe Water And Sanitation To Families Affected By Floods And Mudflows In Tajikistan

Jul 01. Asia Pulse Data Source. Over the last two and a half months, UNICEF has been working to address the immediate humanitarian and long-term recovery needs of families affected by multiple floods and mud flows in Tajikistan, according to the UNICEF in Tajikistan. It is estimated that heavy continuous rainfalls from early April till the beginning of June displaced over 15,000 people in more than 40 districts and towns across the country. Following rapid assessments of the situation on the ground, UNICEF has concentrated its immediate response efforts on Khuroson District in Khatlon Province, the worst-hit area where two major mud flows destroyed four villages, displacing about 440 families.

World Food Program Warns Food Situation Precarious

According to the World Food Program (WFP), some 1.4 million rural residents of Tajikistan -- nearly one-third of the country's rural population -- currently face difficulty getting enough food. Of these, WFP deems 480,000 as severely food insecure, their food intake well below minimum nutritional values. More families are resorting to borrowing or begging to make ends meet. Nearly 70% of those WFP canvassed in a recent survey said they were increasingly forced to ask shopkeepers to extend them credit. Almost 30% of families report switching to less desirable, less expensive foods. This shift in eating practices is seen in family nutrition, with almost one-third of children stunted. Further, as food insecure families seek out less expensive means of feeding themselves they are increasingly using central markets, which has hurt local markets, further reducing access to food in remote areas.

Turkmenistan

Azerbaijan And Turkmenistan Debate Caspian Legal Status

July 2. Messenger Staff. Baku and Ashgabat are continuing consultations concerning their legal entitlements to parts of the Caspian Sea. The next round of bilateral negotiations between the Deputy Foreign Ministers of those two countries will be held on September 8-9 in Ashgabat. Baku and Ashgabat have identified their points of agreement on this issue. The major difference between the sides is the status of the Kiapiaz oil field, which Turkmenistan considers its property and calls Sardar. Five countries claim they have borders in the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan, Russia, and Kazakhstan do not have any claims against each other over this, and they have signed bilateral and trilateral agreements to this effect. Only Turkmenistan and Iran have sea zone claims which have not yet been satisfied. This is why no one has attempted to clarify where the borders in the Caspian Sea are until recently.

Nato Scientists Focus On Radioactive Dump Near Turkmenistan Tourist Resort

June 12. Eurasianet. A team of scientists and experts from NATO are assisting Turkmenistan address the country's radioactive past. Turkmenistan has more than 21,000 tons of radioactive waste stored primarily at two sites, Khazar and Balkanabat, situated 600 kilometers and 400 kilometers from Ashgabat, respectively. The waste is a legacy of the Soviet era, the byproduct of iodine and bromine production. According to news reports, a delegation, led by Dr. Chris De Wispelaere, director of NATO's Science for Peace and Security Program, and French expert Jean-Louis Tison, recently met with representatives from Turkmenistan's Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Nature Protection. NATO's work focuses largely on the Khazar site where some 420 tons of radioactive waste are stored in wooden containers or in open storage over a 3 square-kilometer area. The situation at Khazar is reportedly "serious," as the hazardous waste is located just 200-meters from the shores of the Caspian Sea, according to NATO experts. Khazar is also less than 100-kilometers away from Turkmenistan's flagship tourism project, Avaza.

Turkmenistan Opens First Drop-In Center For Drug Abusers

June 24. Turkmenistanl.ru. The first "Drop-In" Center opened in Ashgabat on 23 June. This social project is designed to provide assistance to drug abusers. It was implemented through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) CAPACITY project jointly with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Drop-In Center will offer anonymous services free of charge. Experienced health professionals will consult patients on all issues of concern and give advice on how to protect themselves from contracting HIV and other diseases with similar modes of transmission. In addition, visitors will be able to watch feature films and special prevention videos and communicate with each other in a climate of trust. Doctors will also refer patients for special treatment.

Turkmen Government Reluctant To Openly Discuss Environmental Issues

The US Embassy reports that, while the Government of Turkmenistan has recently authorized environmental cleanup projects, it appears to be motivated more by preparations for the Avaza Tourism Zone than by a desire to improve the living conditions of the Turkmen people. Despite having signed the European Union's Aarhus Convention, the government is reluctant to speak openly about environmental problems. In addition, citizens lack the organization and resources to focus on environmental issues. The opening of an EU-Tacis-sponsored Information and Resource Center is the first step in Turkmenistan's implementation of the Convention, but the Center has not received any requests from private individuals since its establishment.

Uzbekistan

Foundation Works With Scientists In Uzbekistan On Research Projects



June 4. US Embassy Tashkent. Representatives of a U.S. program that funds scientific research in nations of the former Soviet Union visited Uzbekistan in May and June to evaluate projects that could improve air quality, advance medical techniques and lead to new types of digital video screens. Funded by the U.S. Civilian Research & Development Foundation (CRDF), the foundation, established in 1995 by the U.S. Congress, uses U.S. Government funds to support science projects through grants, technical support and training. Nearly 80 percent of the projects result in publications in scientific peer-reviewed journals. Most of CRDF's funding comes from the U.S. State Department, National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health. Among the projects in Uzbekistan is one at the Institute of Nuclear Physics entitled "Nonconventional Tight-Binding Molecular Dynamics Simulations of Silicon

Nanoparticles," which CRDF says aims to improve nanotechnology, with applications in photovoltaics and bio-imaging. Another project at the Tashkent State Technical University's Center of Science and Progress is "Molar Mass Distribution and Structural Parameters of Water-Soluble Polymers and their Derivatives." It has medical applications in anti-viral and anti-bacterial research. Other projects monitoring air samples in a study meant to characterize and improve air quality in Tashkent and analyzing strategies for reducing health risks among intravenous drug users are examples of other CRDF-funded projects in Uzbekistan.

Breast Cancer Incidence Rises Sixfold in Uzbekistan in 30 Years

2 July. Turkish Weekly. According to statistics from Uzbekistan's health centres, 19 women in every 100,000 suffer from the breast cancer and the incidence of the disease has increased sixfold in the past 30 years. This especially applies to Khorezm, Surkhandarya and some other regions. This problem is of current importance in Uzbekistan like in other countries. Over 2,000 cancer respondents are registered in the country every year and over 11,000 sufferers are registered with health centers. Expensive and lengthy treatment of the disease requires a special attention to the issues of medical and social rehabilitation. According to the main oncologist of the country, Professor M. Gafur-Okhunov, breast cancer is the first most common oncological disease in the country.

A USAID-Funded Public Service Announcement Informs Uzbeks About Tuberculosis

The public service announcement, developed by USAID and Project HOPE, increased the number of queries to the tuberculosis hotline from 2-3 calls a week to 35 a week. It was broadcast over 6,000 times over a period of three months on a private TV channel with national coverage. Due to its effectiveness, the Uzbek national tuberculosis center decided to adopt it for broadcasts on the National TV channel, enabling broader reach. Tuberculosis is at epidemic levels throughout Central Asia, and the public service announcement helps reduce the stigma and ensure timely referrals for diagnosis and treatment.

New IT Skills Increase Diagnostic Accuracy

The Khorezm Regional Pathology Anatomy Bureau in Urgench has improved the accuracy of its cancer diagnoses from 43% to 70%, thanks to new technology and technical training by USAID and UNDP. UNDP's Telemedicine Project provided the bureau with a microscope and a web camera, while the USAID internet access and training project taught four anatomical pathologists how to use the computer technology. As a result, the Bureau began consulting with one another using Telemedicine's online iPath System. When concerned about a diagnosis, these doctors share relevant patient information via iPath.

Forensic Workshop Promotes Role Of Science In A Credible Criminal Justice System

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), with implementation support from the Department of Justice Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, conducted a three-day conference for Uzbekistan experts of forensic laboratories, prosecutors, and judges. The conference focused on crime scene investigation techniques, methods and use of modern pathology analysis, scientific approaches pertaining to homicide investigations, investigations related to natural death, infant death, death due to narcotics overdoses and DNA testing application in personal and property crimes. This event marked another important milestone in U.S.-Uzbekistan cooperation on this rule of law project. It will enable not only scientific experts but also a broad cross-section of the law enforcement community to benefit from the discussions.

III. Regional News Clips

Note: Baktiyor Mukhamadiev's excellent **Weekly Central Asian ESTH News**, sent from our Tashkent office, contains most of the news events that are happening in the region. This section modestly supplements his reporting.

Kazakhstan, China Team Up To Build Nurabad-1 HPP In Tajikistan

July 8. Energo. According to Kazakhstan's ambassador to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan will work with TBEA, a Chinese transformer manufacturer, to build the Nurabad-1 HPP. The station will have a capacity of 350 MW and will be built on the Khingob River. The Chinese company signed an agreement with Tajikistan on construction of Nurabad-1 in early June of this year. The value of the deal has been estimated at US\$560 million, and the two sides have pledged to begin work on the HPP sometime next year. Kazakhstan is interested in other Tajikistani hydropower projects, and has voiced its approval for plans to form an international consortium to build the Rogun HPP. Kazakhstan is willing to join such a group, he said, but no deal on the project has been reached yet. Tajikistan awarded United Company RUSAL, a Russian metals producer, the right to build the Rogun HPP on the Vakhsh River in 2004. However, it scrapped the US\$1 billion deal in 2007, following disputes with RUSAL over the capacity of the plant. The Russian company wanted to build a 2,400-MW HPP capable of supplying two aluminium smelters – an existing plant in Tursunzade that it hoped to acquire and a new smelter it was intending to build in western Tajikistan. Officials in Dushanbe, however, pushed for the construction of a 3,600-MW plant. Rusal backed away from the project after Tajikistan's government decided against privatising the Tursunzade smelter. Dushanbe was critical of this decision and accused the Russian company of bowing to pressure from Uzbekistan. Officials in Tashkent have often voiced concerns about Tajikistani hydropower projects, saying that the new dams required to run large HPPs could disrupt water flows downstream.

NATO To Help Set Up Training Center At Kazakh National Nuclear Center

June 24. Interfax. NATO will provide funds to establish a regional training center for Central Asian countries on the premises of Kazakhstan's National Nuclear Center. "This project, which carries a price tag of 1.3 million euro, envisions the creation of a modern training center for Central Asian countries on the base of the National Nuclear Center. The center will be provided with all the necessary equipment in line with international standards. NATO experts will train our specialists and specialists from the region's other countries to use advanced equipment in the area of nuclear safety," said Tleuken Akhmetov, deputy chairman of the Kazakh Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry's committee for nuclear power. Kazakhstan will begin implementing this project next year.

Russia Signs The Saiga MOU

June 25. Saiga News. On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Bonn Convention, the Russian Federation has signed the Saiga Agreement established in the framework of the Convention. The Saiga antelope is one of most rapidly declining land mammal species worldwide, from one million on the Eurasian steppe in the early 90s to less than 100,000 today. Illegal hunting and ecosystem changes are the main threats. There is a high demand for Saiga horn in traditional Chinese medicine, which is not only used in the Far East, but has also established markets in Europe. In addition, antelope meat serves as a protein source in particular for the poorer sections of the society across the Saiga's range. Conservation of Migratory Species Executive Secretary Robert Hepworth said: "Russia's signature of the Saiga Agreement means that all four of the main Saiga range states have now joined this CMS initiative and our partners to conserve these remarkable antelopes. The commitment of Russia, alongside Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is essential if they are to enjoy a stable future." The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals aims to conserve terrestrial, marine, and avian migratory species and their habitats throughout their range. The Convention was adopted in Bonn, Germany, on 23 June 1979 and entered into force on 1 November 1983. Today, 111 countries are Parties to the Convention.

Anti-Personnel Mine Kills Tajik National On Border With Uzbekistan

July 4. Asia-Plus Online. Another resident of Tajikistan has died as a result of explosion of anti-personnel mine which was planted on the Tajik-Uzbek border by the authorities of the neighbouring country. A source in the Tajik law-enforcement bodies told Asia-Plus that the incident had taken place on 2 July in the evening near the Mullosoi mountain in Panjikent District's Farob community. The source said that a 33-year-old local resident, Mukhsin Mirzoyev, was blown up by anti-personnel mine while he was grazing cattle. "As a result, Mukhsin Mirzoyev died at the scene," the source said. Note: Uzbekistan mined an area near its border with Tajikistan due to threat of Tajik militants' infiltration to its territory during civil war in 1992-97 in Tajikistan and after. Currently Tajikistan has to clear 20 million square miles of its territory from mines.

Tauw Is Training Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, And Uzbekistan To Clean Up Pesticides

June 22. PRNewswire. The World Bank has commissioned the Tauw Group (an international consulting and engineering group) to be a consultant in how to approach old pesticides and organic contaminations that are difficult to decompose (POPs) in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The consultants at Tauw will draw up an inventory as well as address how to deal with the old storage places of these toxic substances. In each of the three countries, ten people will be trained to track down and make an inventory of old storage spaces. In addition, one dumping site in each country will be more closely inspected, after which a sanitation technique will be designed. The Canadian government is financing the project, which will cost 450,000 euros. In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, large amounts of outdated pesticides and POPs, which were used in agriculture and are very harmful to humans and to the environment, have been accumulating for the last several dozen years. Cleaning up these substances is being done in accordance with the Stockholm Convention.

First English-Language Newspaper Published In Tajikistan

June 13. RFE/RL. The first English-language newspaper in Tajikistan has appeared on newsstands in Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. The owner and chief editor of "The Tajik Times" weekly, Nurali Shoev, said that 500 copies of the first issue were printed, but that circulation will expand as the paper finds more readers among English-speaking residents and tourists in Tajikistan. Shoev added that his team has to reprint news from international English language sources, as they have limited capacity to fill the publication with original material. Some Tajik observers are skeptical about the future of the new periodical, saying that some Tajik newspapers have printed English-language sections in the past, but stopped due to lack of interest.

Turkmenistan Revives Academy Of Science

June 13. Associated Press. Turkmenistan's president is ordering the resumption of funding for the country's academy of science. A decree published in state media Saturday says Gurbanguli Berdimukhamedov appointed a director for the Academy of Sciences and created new research departments. His late predecessor Saparmurat Niyazov shut the academy in 1998, describing it as a waste of money. It was formally reopened two years ago but has had no staff and no government funding. Educational standards withered under Niyazov, who made the study of his spiritual guide, the Rukhnama, obligatory for students at all levels. Berdimukhamedov became president in 2007.

Turkmenistan Ensures Safety Of Baby Food And Other Food Products

April 28. Neytralniy Turkmenistan. This newspaper published two revised laws that impose new measures to ensure the safety of baby food and other food products and that outline the government's responsibilities to assure that imported foods, in particular, are safe for consumption. While the laws are generally restrictive regarding new challenges such as genetically-modified foods and food additives, and ban the marketing of infant formulas to expectant mothers, they also reflect some relaxation of restrictions on the importation of foods with a limited shelf life. The latter change could result in more imported foods making it through customs inspection and into the Turkmenistan market. The newly-revised law on food product quality and safety still contains provisions on product certification, labeling, and importation, and continues its ban on the importation of food products made of genetically-modified contents. For the first time, the new law also allows the importation of vitamin and herbal supplements. The revised law states that herbal and vitamin supplements can be imported after the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service of the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry approve and register them in Turkmenistan, assuming that health authorities in the country of origin have approved their use. The Health Ministry is tasked with monitoring the use of supplements, and can restrict or ban their importation if new scientific information surfaces regarding their potential negative side effects. The MOHMI can restrict the importation of food products that contain unauthorized supplements or more than three artificial colors.

Central Asia Regional Environmental Hub

The Central Asia Regional Environment Officer (REO) is responsible for monitoring and reporting on trans-boundary environment, science, technology, and health issues in six countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan.

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Regional Hub Website and Past Newsletters

[Pending]